MARVEL

VOICES

IDENTITY #1

IXXMI · IV

INTRODUCTION BY RINA AYUYANG

My humble initiation into the Marvel Universe consisted of 9-year-old me in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, watching *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends* on Saturday mornings and reading random super hero comics from my brother's collection.

While writing this introduction, I reflected on one particular episode focused on Spider-Man's "amazing friend" Firestar. She begins a fiery (pun intended) romance with a smart, charismatic Japanese businessman named Shiro Yoshida (a.k.a. Sunfire). In the last scene of the episode, Sunfire has to go back to Japan to help his villainous uncle's rehabilitation. While saying their goodbye, Firestar asks Sunfire what the cure is for missing someone. Sunfire responds, "...knowing he will return!" I still remember how emotional I got while watching that heartfelt scene, wondering if Sunfire would ever come back!

Even with my love of the Marvel animation, I must admit that it was hard for me to relate to super heroes in the comics. They seemed intense, larger than life, and (sometimes literally) out of this world--everything that I felt I was not. I instead gravitated to the humor of the Sunday "funnies." I attribute my love of comic strips like *Peanuts* and *Nancy* to why I became part of the small-press indie comics community, mainly reading about people's real-life experiences. Through this community, I was eventually empowered to share my own stories about being Filipino American--a core part of my identity as a creator and fan.

As an adult, I have come to appreciate Marvel comics in a different way. I realized that those intense and larger-than-life storylines I read as a kid--which are still sometimes overwhelming for me--focus a great deal on the relatable human side of being a super hero. Sure, the heroes fought the bad guys, but they also had day jobs, family issues, and even relationship troubles. Beyond the super-powers and super villains, their stories explored vulnerabilities like self-doubt, grief, and fear--all the things I can relate to on a very personal level.

But this isn't anything new--throughout the over 80 years of Marvel, its characters have grappled with the notion of their own identities, including their humanity. I connected with the stories that highlighted their feeling the need to hide instead of being able to celebrate what makes them unique. Growing up as an Asian American and Pacific Islander kid in a predominantly white suburb, it seemed easier to just fit in than to call attention to the things that made me different, even at the risk of feeling less like myself.

I struggled with my own identity. How American was I if I preferred adobo over cheeseburgers? Was I still Filipino if I didn't know how to speak Tagalog? How much of myself was enough to belong? Fast forward to the year 2021, when racial tensions and violence against the Asian American and the Pacific Islander community have increased. The parallels of the community's current anxieties and the themes found in many Marvel storylines--with characters struggling to embrace their identity, and fighting things like alienation, discrimination, fearmongering, and scapegoating--are not lost on me. These stories are not only relatable, but they are also powerful and necessary.

When I became a cartoonist, I finally understood all the work that went into creating a comic. I was inspired by the skill and artistry involved in making even just a single Marvel comic book page and grew to admire the incredible artists behind their creation. There are two particular Marvel covers from my brother's collection that are etched in my mind forever: CONAN THE BARBARIAN #72 and CAPTAIN AMERICA #222. I later discovered that Ernie Chan worked on both of those covers. Ernie was part of a group of Filipino artists like Tony DeZuniga, Alex Niño, Alfredo Alcala, and Nestor Redondo who were recruited by Marvel in the '70s and '80s. To know that Filipinos like me played a huge part in Marvel's legacy made a significant impact on me as a cartoonist and fan.

Now, decades later, we have a whole new generation of Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander artists and writers who are not only writing for Marvel but are also bringing Asian American and Pacific Islander characters to the forefront. Though Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander artists and writers have been integral to the artistry and storytelling of the Marvel Universe for decades, the opportunity to share their talents to tell the stories of Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander Marvel characters like Shang-Chi, Jimmy Woo, Silk, Jubilee, Ms. Marvel, Wave, Silhouette, Silver Samurai, and Armor makes people like me--folks who once felt like these stories didn't and couldn't "belong to me"--get excited by the possibilities and power of the super hero comics genre as a whole.

That is why this moment and the book you have in your hands is so important. Today, I think about that moment from decades ago when I watched Firestar and Sunfire, the first time I remember seeing an Asian super hero, and then look at where we are now. There is a feeling of hope that we will see more Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander characters stepping out of the shadows and finally into the spotlight, written in ways that reflect their communities, with the potential to empower and to finally celebrate their true identity.

Rina Ayuyang

RINA AYUYANG is a Filipino American cartoonist based in Oakland, CA. Her latest graphic novel, "*Blame This on the Boogie*," explores family, Filipino identity, and American pop culture fandom. She has been nominated for the Eisner and Ignatz Awards and has been honored with a MoCCA Arts Fest Awards of Excellence silver medal. She co-hosts an alt-comics podcast called *The Comix Claptrap*, and is currently working on her upcoming graphic novel, "*The Man in the McIntosh Suit*," a film noir inspired by the 1920s' Filipino American immigration experience.

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Check out MARVEL.COM/VOICES for interviews and essays from a diverse array of creators like these!

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JIM CHEUNG & ROMULO FAJARDO JR. // cover

MASHAL AHMED; RIAN GONZALES; INHYUK LEE; PEACH MOMOKO; PHILIP TAN & SEBASTIAN CHENG // variant covers

VC's JOE SABINO // lettering CARLOS LAO // designer

ANGÉLIQUE ROCHÉ // consulting editor

KAT GREGOROWICZ // assistant editor

DARREN SHAN // editor

C.B. CEBULSKI // editor in chief

WHAT IS VS. WHAT IF

WRITER: GENE LUEN YANG
ARTIST: MARCUS TO
COLORIST: SUNNY GHO

WELCOME, SHANG-CHI, SON OF ZHENG ZU.

YOU KNEW I WAS COMING?

WE WATCHED YOU JOURNEY UP OUR MOUNTAIN.

EVER SINCE OUR FOUNDER'S ENCOUNTER WITH A CELESTIAL BEING ALL THOSE CENTURIES AGO, THAT IS WHAT WE HAVE DONE: WATCH.

TELL US, WHAT BRINGS YOU TO THE ORDER OF UATU?

I'M ON A MISSION TO UNDO MY FATHER'S EVIL--

--WHICH INCLUDES GATHERING ALL THE MYSTICAL ITEMS HE CREATED SO THEY DON'T FALL INTO THE WRONG HANDS.

YOU'RE HERE FOR THE RUGUO COIN. YOU'RE WELCOME TO TAKE IT--

WHOOSH

--IF YOU CAN OVERCOME IT!

TELL ME, SHANG-CHI, SON OF ZHENG ZU, WHAT *MOMENT* MOST DEFINES YOUR LIFE?

THE MOMENT...

"...I DEFIED MY FATHER.

"AND *ALLIED* MYSELF WITH THOSE WHO STOOD *AGAINST* HIM.

"AFTER HIS DEATH, I REUNITED WITH MY *FAMILY*. THEN I TOOK CHARGE OF HIS ORGANIZATION, THE *FIVE WEAPONS SOCIETY*."

I'M GOING TO *REFORM* IT INTO EVERYTHING THAT HE WAS *NOT*.

如口果

YOU'VE DESCRIBED *WHAT IS.*

NOW DESCRIBE... *WHAT IF?*

WHAT IF, INSTEAD OF DEFYING ZHENG ZU...

"...I HAD PLEDGED MY *LOYALTY?*

"I WOULD HAVE SPENT MY LIFE *DEFENDING* HIM AGAINST HIS *ENEMIES.*

"I WOULD HAVE *RULED* THE SOCIETY BY HIS SIDE--"

--A *SON* AFTER HIS OWN *IMAGE.*

THIS IS THE POWER OF THE *RUGUO COIN,* SHANG-CHI. IT BRINGS *WHAT IS* AND *WHAT IF*--

--FACE TO FACE!

YOU WANT THE COIN, TRAITOR?

COME. TAKE IT.

YAAAH!

WHAP

YOU CAN'T BEAT ME!

HWOOSH

YOU ABANDONED YOUR FATHER! I TRAINED WITH MINE FOR YEARS!

BECAUSE I DEVOTED ALL THAT I AM TO HIM, I DIDN'T JUST MASTER THE WAY OF THE DEADLY HAND--

SWOK

--I TRANSCENDED IT!

MY MIND IS SINGULAR! FOCUSED!

HRK!

YOURS IS A MULTITUDINOUS DIN!

如口果

"MULTITUDINOUS DIN"?

HWAK

FANCY WORDS FOR A GUY WHO SPENT HIS ENTIRE LIFE IN HIS DAD'S CULT!

YOU PROBABLY DO HAVE A BETTER HOLD OF THE WAY OF THE DEADLY HAND. BUT I'VE LEARNED TOO.

WHA--?!

KRAK

ALLIES.

FROM FRIENDS.

BANG

SHRAK

TEAMMATES.

EVEN MY OWN SIBLINGS.

AND I'M ALL THE STRONGER FOR IT!

NOOO...

FFSSSH

YOU HAVE OVERCOME THE *RUGUO COIN*. IT IS *YOURS* TO TAKE.

THANK YOU, MASTER.

BUT BE *CAREFUL*, SHANG-CHI. WITH OR WITHOUT THE COIN, THE *WHAT IFS* WILL ALWAYS BE THERE, LURKING IN THE *SHADOWS*.

NEVER LET YOUR GUARD DOWN.

The End.

CLEAN THE TOMB...

LEE ZHAN
李战

FRESH FLOWERS...

LEE JINGYI
李静怡

THEN BURN INCENSE...

...AND PRAY.

Everything you need to know about "Gone Sleeping" (ish)

On-screen excerpts for context as long as it has a readership will be a randomly selected sample/ebook.

THAT ONE THING

WRITER/COLORIST: CHRISTINA STRAIN ARTIST: JASON LOO

HEY, MOM AND DAD. IT'S ME, ***JUBILEE.***

I KNOW IT'S BEEN A WHILE...

HOPE YOU HAVEN'T BEEN TOO WORRIED ABOUT ME.

I'LL BE HONEST, I HAVE NO IDEA IF I DID THIS WHOLE GRAVE SWEEPING THING RIGHT

'CAUSE IT'S NOT LIKE EITHER OF YOU HAD A CHANCE TO SHOW ME HOW IT WORKS.

BUT I'M DOING MY BEST.

AND MISSING YOU. A LOT.

ESPECIALLY THESE DAYS...

SOMETIMES, I'LL HEAR A SOUND OR SMELL SOMETHING FAMILIAR...

"AND ALL AT ONCE, IT'S LIKE I CAN'T HELP BUT REMEMBER...

"...THE TIMES I TOOK FOR GRANTED...

IT'S SO GOOD--

I KNOW, MOM. I'M NOT A BABY. YOU DON'T HAVE TO FEED ME!

"...MOMENTS I SKIPPED OUT ON...

JUBILEE, COULD YOU HELP ME COOK SOME--

SORRY. CAN'T.

BUT--

GOTTA POO!

"...TIMES I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW EASY I REALLY HAD IT...

HAVE FUN AT THE MALL, AND DON'T TELL MOMMY.

UH, OBVIOUSLY.

"...EVEN THE TIMES I THOUGHT I DIDN'T...

DAZZLER

LILA CHENEY

YOU SPENT *HOW MUCH* ON THOSE GLASSES?!

YOU KNOW *NOTHING* ABOUT FASHION!

"...BUT IN THE END, I ALWAYS COME BACK TO THAT ONE THING YOU SAID...."

DON'T YOU MISS HONG KONG?

OF COURSE WE DO. IT WAS OUR HOME.

BUT SOMETIMES, WHERE YOU ARE ISN'T AS IMPORTANT--

--AS WHO YOU'RE WITH.

BECAUSE IT'S FAMILY WHO CARRIES YOU THROUGH THE WORST OF IT.

"AND AS ALWAYS, YOU WERE RIGHT. BECAUSE WHEN I LOST YOU...

"...I FOUND A FAMILY. AND THEY CARRIED ME THROUGH THE WORST OF IT."

MOM. DAD.

WHEREVER YOU ARE, I HOPE YOU'RE DOING WELL.

I LOVE YOU.

JUBILEE!

JONO!

SORRY SHOGO AND I TOOK SO LONG. YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE THE LINE.

NO WORRIES.

WE'RE JUST GLAD YOU'RE BOTH HERE.

LEE JINGYI
李静怡

LEE ZHAN
李战

LOO

The End.

San Francisco.

JIMMY, I FOUND THAT SECRET GOVERNMENT WAREHOUSE...

...BUT I HAVEN'T SEEN THIS MONSTER EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT. ARE YOU SURE--

GRRAAAAAA!

AAAAAH!

YEAH...

RRAAAAAA!

...I'M SURE.

WHOA!

JIMMY WOO 1959

WRITER: GREG PAK ARTIST: CREEES LEE COLORIST: BRIAN REBER

WHA--!

GRRAAAA!

GAAAH!

WHY DON'TCHA WAIT HERE A MINUTE, MAY?

SORRY, AGENT WOO. I'M NOT LOSING ANOTHER SCOOP TO WHATEVER *CLASSIFIED AGENCY* YOU'RE *MANHUNTING* FOR THESE DAYS.

WAIT, WHERE'D IT GO?

SONOFA...

OFF THE RECORD, MISS TAKEUCHI, I'M NOT MANHUNTING FOR *ANYONE* RIGHT NOW.

RIGHT. *MONSTER* HUNTING. SORRY.

NO, I'M SERIOUS.

WHAT? *JIMMY!* ALL YOU'VE EVER *WANTED* IS TO BE A *G-MAN!*

I MEAN, SINCE WE WERE *KIDS!* WHAT HAPPENED?

WELL, WHEN WE WERE *KIDS*, I WAS PRETTY FOCUSED ON *JUSTICE.*

KRRAAAAA!

AND I GUESS I THOUGHT I'D *GET* IT...

...IF I WORKED FOR WHOEVER HAD THE *BIGGEST STICK...*

...BUT THEN YOU FIND OUT ABOUT EVERYONE WHO'S GETTING *BEAT DOWN.*

BUDDABUDDABUDDABUDDA

GRRRAAAAAA!

KILL THAT THING!

WOO? DIDN'T YOU *QUIT?* YOU DON'T HAVE CLEARANCE TO--

BUDDABUDDABUDDABUDDA

JIMMY!

SONOFA-- THAT'S *FEDERAL PROPERTY,* WOO!

SPRAAACH

WHAAA!

OH YEAH?

TELL THAT TO THE *VENUSIAN* YOU *STOLE* IT FROM.

RRRR?

THIS *IS* YOUR *ALIEN POWER REACTOR*, ISN'T IT?

CLACK

ATTABOY. ALL *POWERED UP* AGAIN AND READY TO--

NO!

HA!

I HATE THAT GUY.

FWOOOOOMP

WHOA!

RRRRR!

WELL, I'M SURE YOU'LL *RETURN* THE FAVOR IF THE *VENUSIAN OVERLORDS* EVER LOCK *ME* UP IN A *SECRET LAB.*

SAFE TRAVELS, PAL.

IF *I* DON'T STICK UP FOR THE *WEIRDOS...*

...WHO WILL?

WOOOOOOOOM

FOR THE BIGGEST *SQUARE* I'VE EVER KNOWN...

...YOU SURE DO HAVE SOME INTERESTING *FRIENDS,* MR. WOO.

BEEN AN *OUTSIDER* ALL MY LIFE, MISS TAKEUCHI.

ARE YOU CALLING ME A *WEIRDO,* JIMMY WOO?

OH, I'D HAVE TO GET A COUPLE BEERS IN ME BEFORE I'D BE *THAT* BOLD.

SOUNDS GOOD TO ME.

THIS IS ALL ON THE RECORD, BY THE WAY.

WAAAAAIT A MINUTE!

End.

SEEING RED

WRITER: SABIR PIRZADA ARTIST: MASHAL AHMED COLORIST: NEERAJ MENON

Port of Karachi, Pakistan.

<I THINK MAYBE YOU ARE *OVERREACTING* JUST A LITTLE BIT.>*

<YOUR DISRUPTIONS HAVE COST US FIFTY CRORE.>

<EACH.>

<MAYBE WE TAKE A *LIMB* FOR EVERY SHIPMENT YOU'VE RUINED, RED DAGGER.>

*TRANSLATED FROM URDU. --DS

<ABOUT THAT...YOU SHOULD PROBABLY CHECK YOUR SHIPMENTS MORE CAREFULLY. I PLACED *TRACKERS* IN ALL OF THEM, AND...>

<WHAT THE-->

<...I MIGHT HAVE SHARED THIS LOCATION WITH A FRIEND.>

LET'S MAKE THIS QUICK. I'M MISSING LIFE-CHANGING BIHARI KEBABS FOR THIS.

TOOK YOU LONG ENOUGH, *MS. MARVEL!* DON'T TELL ME YOU GOT LOST. IT'S LITERALLY *ONE ROAD* TO GET HERE--

WELL, *EXCUSE ME,* YOU DIDN'T MENTION THERE WOULD BE SEVEN ROUNDABOUTS AND A TON OF TRAFFIC!

A LITTLE WARNING NEXT TIME YOU'RE GOING TO THROW KNIVES ABOVE MY HEAD?

DON'T WORRY, MY AIM IS *PRECISE.* I CAN PUT YOUR FRIEND HAWKEYE TO SHAME *ANY DAY.*

HAWKEYE'S NOT REALLY A KNIFE PERSON. MAYBE BULLSEYE? BUT I HAVE A FEELING YOU TWO DON'T HAVE MUCH ELSE IN COMMON.

SHOULD I EVEN ASK WHAT THE DEAL IS WITH THESE GUYS?

THEY CALL THEMSELVES *"THE KHUSHKHATI."* CONTRABAND RUNNERS USING URDU LETTERS TO MASK THEIR IDENTITIES.

YOU *CAN* READ URDU, RIGHT?

SURE.

BETTER THAN MY TODDLER NEPHEW, ANYWAY.

Clifton Beach.
Later.

OKAY, YOU WIN. I THOUGHT I KNEW THE BEST KEBABS IN KARACHI, BUT THESE ARE EVEN BETTER, HANDS DOWN.

TOLD YOU. HOW LONG ARE YOU VISITING FOR?

BACK TO SCHOOL ON MONDAY. THEN THERE'S NO MORE VACATION UNTIL SUMMER IN CHICAGO. HEY, THIS KEBAB ISN'T GOING TO GIVE ME A GIGANTIC STOMACHACHE, WILL IT--

HEY!!! WHERE'RE YOU GOING?

YOU'RE NOT AFRAID OF A LITTLE WATER, ARE YOU?

UH, NO. IT'S JUST...MY AMMI SAYS IT'S NOT SAFE TO GO IN THE WAVES.

كباب

كباب

THE CURRENTS ARE TOO TURBULENT TO SWIM IN AT THIS TIME OF YEAR, THAT'S TRUE. BUT THIS CLOSE TO SHORE CAN'T HURT.

YOWZA! IT'S *FREEZING.*

JUST GIVE IT A MINUTE. YOU'LL GET USED TO IT. (WHEN YOU'RE NUMB.)

REMARKABLE.

WHAT?

YOU CAN CHANGE SIZE AND CONTORT YOUR BODY IN ALL KINDS OF WAYS, BUT THAT DOESN'T SHIELD YOU FROM THE SHIVER OF THE ARABIAN SEA.

WELL, MY FIRST COSTUME WAS MADE OUT OF A BURQINI, BUT SINCE THEN I'VE TRADED INSULATION FOR MALLEABILITY, SO...UH...

IS THIS BETTER?

YES. BUT DON'T PUSH IT.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO LEAVE SO SOON, YOU KNOW. YOU HARDLY EVER VISIT PAKISTAN.

TELL ME ***HONESTLY,*** HAVE YOU BEEN TO SPACE MORE OFTEN THAN KARACHI?

I CAN'T JUST DROP IN HERE WHENEVER I HAVE A FREE TUESDAY NIGHT. I GO WHERE I'M ***NEEDED.***

MAYBE JERSEY CITY DOESN'T NEED YOU AS MUCH AS YOUR PEOPLE HERE DO. UNLESS OF COURSE YOU ***DON'T*** REALLY WANT TO BE HERE.

THAT'S NOT IT. IT'S JUST...THE LONGER I'M HERE, THE MORE I'M MISSING MY LIFE ***THERE.*** AND IT'S HARD TO VISIT LONG-TERM WHEN MY URDU'S RUSTY AND ***EVERYTHING*** POISONS MY STOMACH.

ACHAA, SO NOW I UNDERSTAND. YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE YOU BELONG.

YOU'RE A SELF-HATING PAKISTANI.

AAAAAND I'M DONE. THANKS FOR RUINING EVERYTHING.

JERK.

"KAMALA? WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN SO EARLY IN THE MORNING? DID YOU GET LOST COMING BACK FROM THE MARKET?"

"I--"

"BETA, THIS ISN'T JERSEY CITY. IF YOU WANT TO GO SOMEWHERE, I'LL TAKE YOU. BUT YOU CAN'T JUST WANDER OFF.

"PEOPLE CAN TELL YOU'RE NOT FROM HERE."

"HOW?"

"I DON'T KNOW. THEY JUST CAN."

"BUT I AM FROM HERE. I'M PAKISTANI, SO HOW CAN ANYONE SAY I'M NOT FROM--"

--UUAGH... WOO BOY... HOLD THAT THOUGHT.

HUUAAGH

KAMALA? ARE YOU OKAY?

I'M FINE, AMMI. TOTALLY FINE.

IT'S JUST THE KEBABS.

End.

Cebu, Philippines.

<PEARL, DON'T FORGET TO PICK UP INGREDIENTS FOR SINIGANG.>*

<YEAH, I KNOW, LOLO.>

<I GOT THE GABI AND BANGUS.>

<FRESH? FROM THE GOOD MARKET?>

*Translated from Cebuano. --DS

<OF COURSE IT'S FRESH, LOLO.>

<I'M ON MY WAY HOME NOW.>

<I JUST HAVE TO WRAP SOMETHING UP FIRST.>

PERSONAL HEROES

WRITER: ALYSSA WONG ARTIST: WHILCE PORTACIO COLORIST: JAY DAVID RAMOS

ZAP ZZAT ZZAT

HISSSSS!

<WAIT, ON THE DOCK...>

<THAT'S--!>

BISHOP?!

<FROM THE X-MEN?!>

OKAY, SNAKE, WE CAN DO THIS THE EASY WAY OR THE EASIER WAY.

ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, YOU'RE COMING BACK TO KRAKOA WITH ME.

<LOLO, I'M GONNA HAVE TO CALL YOU BACK!>

<I'M ABOUT TO MEET ONE OF MY HEROES!>

KA-KOOM

UNGH!

HISSSSS!

MIND IF I CUT IN?

KRSSHH

BY THE WAY, IT'S AN HONOR TO MEET YOU, MR. BISHOP.

I'M--

WAVE!

FROM THE AGENTS OF ATLAS!

WAIT, YOU KNOW WHO I AM?

OF COURSE I DO! YOU'RE A *LEGEND* IN MY TIMELINE.

MY PARENTS USED TO TELL STORIES ABOUT YOU WHEN I WAS A CHILD.

I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO SEE YOU IN ACTION.

YOU'RE ONE OF MY *HEROES.*

NO WAY!

BE COOL, PEARL.

KA-CHOOOM

SORRY TO BRING A MUTANT PROBLEM TO YOUR SHORES.

IT'S FINE--WE GET ANNOYING TOURISTS ALL THE TIME.

SPLUP

HSSSSS!

STILL...

PRETTY *STUPID* TO BRING A *WATER MONSTER* TO A FIGHT IN *MY* HOMETOWN.

A LITTLE LIQUID MANIPULATION, AND--

--THERE YOU ARE.

FWOSH

LET ME SEND YOU HOME WITH A *SOUVENIR.*

HHGK!

SWWSSHHHH

THOOMPH

KRAAACKK

GUUH!

AW MAN, THE GROCERIES... MY LOLO'S GOING TO KILL ME.

AT LEAST THE *GABI'S* OKAY.

YEAH...

SO, UH, MY LOLO'S MAKING ***SINIGANG***, AND HE ALWAYS MAKES ***WAY*** TOO MUCH FOR TWO PEOPLE.

YOU COULD STAY FOR DINNER? IF YOU WANT?

WAVE...

"...I'D LOVE TO."

The End.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARVEL CREATIVE LARRY HAMA

BY ANGELIQUE ROCHE

Over Marvel's eight-plus decades, the characters and creatives in the Marvel Universe have continued to evolve. As we celebrate the amazing stories in MARVEL'S VOICES: IDENTITY #1, we also want to take a look back to spotlight one of Marvel's Asian American creators, Larry Hama. I sat down to chat with Larry about his career, the evolution of the comics industry, and his time at Marvel. The life-long creative has served as the writer and artist for many series including but not limited to G.I. JOE (1982) and WOLVERINE (1988), and he was also an editor for CONAN, CRAZY MAGAZINE, and FUMETTI. But his credits outside of the comics industry run just as long—fashion designer, performing as a cast member of the Stephen Sondheim-directed Broadway play *Pacific Overtures*, playing a soldier on *M*A*S*H*, serving as a soldier in the The United States Army during the Vietnam War.

You've done so many incredible things in your life—comics, musical theater, television writing, and even an appearance on *SNL*—is this what you set out to do as a kid? I learned very early in life that, when the train comes to the station, if you don't get on it, it might never stop there again.

When were you first introduced to comics? The first comics I remember were *Uncle Scrooge* comics. In those days [1950s], every kid had a stack of comics.

How did comics feel for you at that time? I was really fascinated by Carl Barks' *Uncle Scrooge*. I loved the concept of the Junior Woodchucks--this fascinating fantasy of being a part of something where the kids were empowered. The very fact that there was this funny animal universe, meant that I could fantasize about being part of it. It didn't matter if I didn't look like everybody else.

What was it about comic books that followed you through your life? It's what I could do. It's not something I started out wanting to. I never thought I'd be a writer. I still don't consider myself a writer or an artist. I'm a person who draws. I think the word "artist" is an acclamation, not a job description. Calling yourself an artist is a little pretentious. It self-assumes that what you do is art.

So what about acting and Broadway? It all goes back to getting on that train. All these things that I've done, I had absolutely no idea how to do them. I never went to college. I had a full New York State Regents scholarship to Pratt but dropped out on registration day. I went downtown and got a job drawing shoes for the Sears Roebuck catalogs.

I got my first acting job completely by accident. I was in the elevator, and a woman gets on. She looks at me and asks, "Are you an actor?" I said, "No." She says, "Well, do you want to be one?" She was producing an off-Broadway production of *Moby Dick*. So, I went the next day, and I got the part.

You got on the train. I got on the train, man. Somebody saw me in that show, and I started getting gigs. A year later, I got a call to audition for a Broadway musical. I neither sang, nor danced, but she liked my look.

Wolverine #48, cover by Marc Silvestri & Dan Green

You got on the train. I walk over. Hal Prince looks at me and says, "I want to see him in the theater tomorrow." The next day I give them the first two verses of "Just Like a Woman," by Bob Dylan, because I knew a nifty guitar riff for it. Hal Prince, Stephen Sondheim, Paul Gemignani, and Patricia Berg--these are the top musical theater people in the country--are looking back at me slack-jawed. It was later that I signed an Equity Broadway Producers principals' contract.

How did you end up at Marvel? I got a job offer at DC as an editor. I remember walking in, sitting down at my editor's desk and thinking, "What the heck does an editor do?" I had no idea. So, I just sort of started making it up as I went along.

Almost exactly a year later, DC had a major sales drop, and Al Milgrom--another artist--and I were let go. Al Milgrom landed on his feet at Marvel. A month later, Al calls me and says, "Hey! The water's fine! Why don't you come over here!" So I did--I got a gig at Marvel being in charge of CRAZY MAGAZINE.

How did the industry look at that time? In the early '70s, in my opinion, the comic book industry was pretty damn color-blind. They did not care if you were, white, purple, pink, brown or chartreuse. If you could do the the work, you were golden.

There were vestiges of things left over from previous generations, the conceptual stuff. The ingrained sort of prejudice that people didn't notice anymore, like coloring Asian people bright yellow. It wasn't like this was a policy--it was because that's the way it had always been done. That was the way that they/we were trained to do these things. So they just kept on doing that. Even if the people that were doing them themselves were Asian.

Do you feel like you were able to change this? I thought stuff had to change, but the only way that was gonna happen was for people of color to come into editorial. That was gonna make a big difference.

Marvel was structured differently at this time, right? It was a real bullpen, We had real wooden drawing tables there and big pots of rubber cement and pieces of paper being glued together to make the pages. There wasn't a computer in sight.

Yeah? The offices at Marvel were completely open at that time. There was no, signing in at the door. A freelancer would come in and go sit in one office for an hour, then stroll down the hall and sit in another office. That's how a lot of work was sort of acquired.

People networked, and they socialized outside the office. At the first *Star Wars* movie, Chris Claremont was the first one in line. He just let everybody else in the comic book industry come in front of him, much to the chagrin of the rest of the line.

What was it about the stories at Marvel that you were able to draw and tell that made you stay? At that time, there were two styles of writing for comics. The DC method and the Marvel method. DC was more like a full screenplay. The Marvel method was plot and dialogue. The Marvel method gave most of the creative freedom to the artists. I always thought that the Marvel method was one of the main things that led to Marvel taking the lead away from DC.

How do you find your voice in all of this? It takes a while to find your own voice. Doing comics takes a very bizarre combination of chops. I craft a story by trying to visualize the whole thing in my head as a visual sequence rather than thinking of it in words. I don't think of it in terms of words. I'm dyscalculic, which means I can't do simple arithmetic, sort of like dyslexia. For instance, the only way I can remember that Christmas is on December 25 is I have a mental picture in my head of a calendar page with a red 25 on it.

So I have had to come up with little tricks like that 'cause I can't remember numbers as abstractions. I can see numbers as their visual symbols.

My thinking is that every aspect of a character is important--the gestures, the slightest movement in the facial features, are part of the acting. You combine that with the lighting and the framing and the pace.

I'm pretty good at doing visual storytelling and getting down a basic story, but I'm not a very good finish artist. I'm not a terrific renderer. My anatomy chops are very sketchy. But I try to concentrate on what I know I can do and what I know I'm good at. So that's what I work at. At the same time, I'm always aware of this really important thing that Gail Adams told me years ago, in the '70s that I had to stop settling. And he said that when I was working on my drawings.

He said, "You're settling." And I said, "Well, what do you mean?" He said, "I can tell that you see something in your head that's ten times better than what you're drawing there on the board. Instead of settling, you should try to draw that really difficult thing, and you have to accept that the first time you do that, it's probably gonna suck. And even the second or third or fourth time, it's gonna suck. But the magic happens on the day that it stops sucking."

But you don't--get to that day when it stops sucking unless you have all those other days before when it sucked.

I would imagine that that was helpful on that journey, being able to take those risks. Yeah, you have to take the risks, and you also have to understand the reality of what you're doing.

What was it for you that kept you going? You have to have thick skin, have faith in yourself and not care what other people are saying. I went to a specialized art high school, and there were dozens of people there that could draw rings around me. And they never went anywhere with it because they got shot down the first time, they got rejected. You know, 90% of getting ahead in any of the arts--in drawing, writing, acting, music--is getting past the incredible amount of rejection that you have to wade through to get your foot on the shore.

You have written G.I. JOE, you've written IRON FIST, and you've drawn across the board. How do you approach "authentic storytelling" and bringing the voice out of these characters, whether it is writing or image-wise? It's Stanislavski. You have to walk in their shoes. You just can't create this mannequin and assign it attributes. You have to construct a character that's as real as you can make it and then inhabit the character, and walk around as the character. And, like you said, sometimes I get to the point where I realize the plot is dictating what the characters do.

The plot should never trump the characters. If the story doesn't come out of the true interactions of the characters, then it's just flat choreography, and soulless creatures are just marching through this choreography that you've created. You have to have the characters interacting and being themselves, and then, all of a sudden, fate throws a monkey wrench into it. And then you have to deal with that as a story element.

That's all there is to it. That's why I've never written an outline. I write everything literally page-by-page. I don't know what comes on page seven until I get to page six. I just make it up as I go along. You know, I'm up to 287 issues of G.I. JOE, and I have no idea how I got there.

Now we have MARVEL'S VOICES IDENTITY #1. When you started making comics at Marvel, did you think this would happen? I thought it was going to be an eventuality. I looked around and I saw where the new talent was coming from. We were getting second-generation Chinese Canadians, an influx of Filipinos, folks from Argentina --including Garcia-López--Mexico, and China. And, you know, it was on the wall.

As the writers and the artists moved up the ladder and moved into editorial, more changes happened. Because there was a voice at the editorial meeting.

Wolverine #90, cover by Adam Kubert, Gray Hildebrandt & Tim Hildebrandt

Do you think it makes a difference when there is a voice in the room? Well, absolutely. And it brings a whole new dimension to it.

Check out an extended version of this interview in Season 5 of the *Marvel's Voices* podcast, coming this fall to SiriusXM and everywhere you listen to podcasts.

SINGULAR/PLURAL

WRITER: JEREMY HOLT ARTIST: ALTI FIRMANSYAH COLORIST: IRMA KNIIVILA

New York City.

WHAT IS IN A NAME?

LIKE THE VERY OUTFITS WE CLOTHE OUR BODIES IN TO DO BATTLE, OUR NAME PROVIDES A NECESSARY MENTAL SEPARATION FOR THE DUALISTIC LIFESTYLES OF SUPER HEROES.

HOWEVER, I OFTEN FEEL TRAPPED BY THE FACT THAT *SILHOUETTE* IS WORKING DOUBLE SHIFTS AS MY BIRTH AND CRIMEFIGHTING NAME.

IRONICALLY, I'VE RESORTED TO USING A NEW ALIASES FOR A SLEW OF SUICIDE MISSIONS OF MY OWN MAKING...

...OTHERWISE KNOWN AS *THE NEW YORK CITY DATING SCENE.*

HI. *CRYSTAL?*

THAT'S ME.

YOU'RE SO EXOTIC-LOOKING. WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

I'M FROM HERE.

NO, I MEAN WHERE ARE YOU *FROM* FROM?

WHILE YOUR REAL NAME ONCE BELONGED TO AN ASS-KICKING MEMBER OF THE NOW-DEFUNCT *NEW WARRIORS*...

SO, *MONICA*... ABOUT YOUR HANDICAP. WHEN IT COMES TO...*INTIMACY*, HOW DOES IT WORK DOWN THERE?

...YOUR ALIAS HAS TO ENDURE EXCRUCIATING CONVERSATIONS LIKE THESE.

I'M SO SORRY, *JANELLE*. I'LL BE TWO SECONDS.

I USED TO BELIEVE MY NAME SERVED AS METAPHORIC ARMOR OVER MY FRAGILE PSYCHE.

OR SHOWCASED MY EXTRAORDINARY ABILITY TO USE ANY SHADOW AS MY OWN PERSONAL TELEPORTER.

BUT LATELY MY NAME IS SIMPLY A PAINFUL REMINDER THAT I'VE BECOME THE *EMBODIMENT* OF MY POWER.

TRUTH IS, I NO LONGER FEEL LIKE I'M MANIPULATING DARKFORCE. RATHER, DARKFORCE HAS RELEGATED ME TO A *DISEMBODIED* EXISTENCE.

New York City Civil Court.

SO AGAIN, WHAT IS IN A NAME?

LIKE THE DIASPORA OF BEING BIRACIAL, MY CONFLICT ISN'T WITH WHAT I WAS BORN WITH...

DING

...IT HAS MORE TO DO WITH THE ABSENCE OF ANOTHER IDENTITY THAT I COULD WEAR IN BROAD DAYLIGHT.

THE NAME CHANGE PETITION WILL BE SIXTY-FIVE DOLLARS.

CHECK OKAY?

YES, MA'AM.

THIS PROVERBIAL NAKEDNESS HAS LEFT ME FEELING EXPOSED FOR FAR TOO LONG. TIME TO CHANGE THAT.

AND HOW MUCH WOULD AD SPACE FOR THIS COST?

OKAY. THE NAME? *JANELLE CHORD.*

THAT WORKS FOR ME. THANKS SO MUCH.

I CAN SHADOWMELD, DIMENSION HOP AND BECOME *"LIVING DARKNESS."* YET I AM COMPLETELY ***POWERLESS*** TO THE MUNDANE SWIPING OF THIS DATING APP.

TWONG

KENDRA! NOT SO FAST.

OH, HELLO AGAIN.

DADDY, WHO'S THIS?

THIS IS... A LOVELY FRIEND OF MINE. IT'S OKAY--YOU CAN INTRODUCE YOURSELF.

HELLO. MY NAME IS KENDRA. WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU, KENDRA. I'M JANELLE. AND IT'S NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN, PATRICK.

DAAAAAD. CAN WE GO PLAY MORE FOUR SQUARE?

EXCUSE KENDRA HERE. SHE ALTERNATES WEEKENDS BETWEEN ME AND HER MOM, WHO HAD TO WORK THE OTHER NIGHT. I TRIED TO HELP FIND A SITTER LAST-MINUTE, HENCE BEING GLUED TO MY PHONE.

ANYWAY... WHAT DO YOU SAY TO A DO-OVER?

I'M LISTENING...

I HAVE COURTSIDE SEATS TO A KNICKS GAME NEXT WEEKEND. WANNA BE MY PLUS-ONE?

COUNT ME IN.

GREAT! I'LL TEXT YOU.

DAD, C'MON. LET'S GO!

OKAY...WHERE WAS I DURING OUR DATE? BECAUSE HE'S SUPER CUTE AND A TOTAL GENTLEMAN.

PERHAPS I'M NOT GIVING JANELLE ENOUGH CREDIT.

IF SHE HAD THE WHEREWITHAL TO ESTABLISH NEW BOUNDARIES FOR HERSELF...

Remove "Kindling"?
Removing from Home Screen will keep the App Library
Delete App
Remove from Home Screen
Cancel

...THEN THE LEAST SILHOUETTE CAN DO IS SUPPORT HER BY STEPPING OUT IN FRONT OF HER OWN SHADOW.

End.

KRAKOA.

I LOVE SUSHI ROLLS, ARMOR.

THE SCENT OF THE RICE VINEGAR...

TRADITIONAL PINK SUSHI

THE CRUNCHY SEAWEED...

MY HONORABLE MOTHER WOULD MAKE THEM FROM TIME TO TIME.

ONE OF THE MOST PRECIOUS MEMORIES OF MY CHILDHOOD...

LOOK, LOOK, SILVER SAMURAI!

TA-DAAAAH!

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

WHAT...?

PI...PINK RICE?!

YES! I ADDED SOME KETCHUP AND MAYONNAISE!

AREN'T THEY PRETTY?

YOU'RE.. YOU'RE...

YOU'RE A DISGRACE!!

OH, YOU GIRLS RAISED IN AMERICA! YOU HAVE NO RESPECT FOR ANYTHING!

SUSHI IS NOT A GAME! IT'S ART! IT'S TRADITION!

YOUR ANCESTORS WILL HAUNT YOU FOREVER FOR THIS!

OH, REALLY?

LOOK WHO'S TALKING! THE ONE WHO COMES OUT OF NOWHERE AND GOES:

"I'VE JUST CAUGHT SOME FISH -- LET'S COOK SOME SUSHI!"

A RANDOM BLUE ALIEN FISH, NO LESS!

RESPECT YOUR ELDERS!

THIS IS THE ONLY KIND OF FISH THAT ONE CAN GET IN KRAKOA!

OH, IS IT?

THEN YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE ME IF I USE A BIT OF KETCHUP SINCE WE'RE OUT OF RICE VINEGAR. SILLY ME!

WELL...

WELL, WHAT? LISTEN, WE'RE TRYING TO MAKE TRADITIONAL SUSHI ON A LIVING ISLAND IN THE MIDDLE OF THE OCEAN, USING AN ALIEN FISH AND TREE LEAVES INSTEAD OF THE SEAWEED.

SO, YOU AND ALL OF MY ANCESTORS SHOULD GET OVER IT AND ENJOY THE DELICIOUS PINK SUSHI I'VE MADE!

IT IS WHAT IT IS.

...

THE END OF CIVILIZATION BASICALLY.

AND SO...

...

munch munch

"HONORABLE MOTHER!"

THIS SUSHI FILLS ME WITH JOY.

COULD I DARE ASK YOU TO MAKE MORE TOMORROW?

WHATEVER PLEASES YOU, MY DEAR SON.

YES!

ALLOW ME TO EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE BY HUGGING YOU!

OH, MY DEAR, HONORABLE MOTHER...

"... I LOVE YOU SO MUCH!"

HA! LOOK!

IT SAYS IT'S BEEN A YEAR SINCE WE MADE OUR FIRST PINK SUSHI!

ARMOR

CONGRATULATIONS!

1 YEAR

REMEMBER HOW YOU HATED THEM AT FIRST?

...

SHUT UP AND PASS ME THE KETCHUP.

...AND THIS IS HOW SILVER SAMURAI LEARED THAT TRADITIONS, JUST LIKE MEMORIES, ARE CONSTANTLY RENEWED.

End.

NEW YORK STATE OF MIND

WRITER: MAUREEN GOO
ARTIST: LYNNE YOSHII
COLORIST: SEBASTIAN CHENG

AMADEUS, I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE DRAGGING ME TO THE STATUE OF LIBERTY LIKE A BIG DORK *TOURIST.*

YOU NEW YORKERS ALWAYS THINK YOU'RE TOO COOL FOR THIS STUFF BUT THEN MISS OUT ON *ALL* THE COOL HISTORY OF YOUR OWN CITY.

I *GUESS.*

YOLO, CINDY. YO. LO.

UGH! TOURISTS.

IT WAS AN ACCIDENT!

BUMP

NO *WAY* SHOULD A LEGIT PIZZA INCLUDE *PINEAPPLES.*

OH YEAH? YOU LIKE *THICK CRUST.*

BETTER THAN FREAKING *FRUIT* ON A SLICE.

SHUT UP!

NO, *YOU* SHUT UP!

NEW YORKERS ARE AN ANGRY BUNCH.

AS IF YOU'RE *NOT* ANGRY?

I AM, IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED, VERY *CHILL.*

PLEASE, YOU'RE *KOREAN.*

SO?

HAVEN'T YOU HEARD OF *HAN?*

NO, WHAT'S THAT?

IT'S KIND OF COMPLICATED, AND I'M NOT EVEN SURE IF ALL KOREANS AGREE ON THE CONCEPT--

--BUT WHAT IT MEANS TO *ME* IS THAT IT'S LIKE COLLECTIVE GRIEF AND RESENTMENT WE CARRY BECAUSE OF OPPRESSION. I KNOW *I* FEEL IT.

GEEZ. DOES IT ALSO MEAN *DRAMATIC MUCH?*

SPEAKING OF DRAMA...

...WHAT IS *WRONG* WITH EVERYONE?

DOESN'T IT SEEM WEIRD?

YEAH. LIKE IT'S OUT OF THEIR CONTROL.

EXACTLY. SOMETHING'S CAUSING PEOPLE TO *HULK OUT.*

WHY AREN'T *WE* BEING AFFECTED THOUGH?

THE RADIATION RUNNING THROUGH OUR BLOOD? OR MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE I'M NATURALLY CHILL AND YOU'RE, YOU KNOW, IN THERAPY?

HEY, NOTICE ANYTHING WEIRD ABOUT LADY LIBERTY?

CAW

CAW

CAW

CAW

CAW

THOSE BIRDS SURE SEEM TO LIKE HER.

MY SILK SENSES ARE GOING HAYWIRE AS WE GET CLOSER.

READY FOR SOME WEB-SLINGING, *SILK?*

ALWAYS, *BRAWN.*

WHOA, THIS IS BAD.
WE NEED TO GET INSIDE THE STATUE-- STAT.
I SEE WHAT YOU DID THERE.
WHAT IN THE NAME OF OZ ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO BE?
IT'S FREAKING SCARECROW. ARE YOU DOING THIS?
THE BIGGER QUESTION IS-- WHO THE HELL ARE YOU TWO? WHERE ARE THE AVENGERS?
SORRY TO DISAPPOINT, BUT IT'S JUST US TODAY.
I WASTED ALL MY RAGE-INDUCING PHEROMONES ON THE DAMN B TEAM? TYPICAL!
B TEAM?
I...I THINK I'M STARTING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT EVERYONE'S RAGING ABOUT.
ME TOO! I'M GONNA END THIS STRAW MAN!
NOW YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE ME-- ALWAYS ANGRY.
NO MATTER WHAT I DO--I NEVER GET THE ATTENTION THAT BEFITS A VILLAIN!
I MANAGE TO TURN ALL THESE PEOPLE INTO BLOODTHIRSTY KILLERS, AND THE AVENGERS DON'T EVEN BOTHER SHOWING UP?
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT FEELS LIKE? TO NEVER GET ANY ATTENTION? TO FEEL INVISIBLE?
CAW
DO WE KNOW WHAT THAT FEELS LIKE?
SIR, WE ARE ASIAN AMERICAN.

TRY GROWING UP MISTAKEN AS THE OTHER ASIAN KID IN YOUR GRADE UP UNTIL GRADUATION. EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE A FOOT TALLER THAN THE OTHER GUY!

OR BEING TOLD YOUR FEATURES MAKE YOU LOOK "INEXPRESSIVE."

WHAT ABOUT GETTING YOUR ONE-SYLLABLE LAST NAMED BOTCHED CONSTANTLY?

SWSH

OR BEING ASKED *MANY TIMES IN YOUR LIFE* IF YOU EAT DOGS.

BEING TOLD THAT YOU'RE THE *"GOOD MINORITY."*

GETTING ATTACKED FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN *THE WAY YOU LOOK.*

THWIP

THWIP

AND YOU FORGET ONE THING...

WE'RE KOREAN. WE'RE *BORN* ANGRY.

WHUMP

Soon.

WAS YOUR TRIP TO THE STATUE OF LIBERTY EVERYTHING YOU IMAGINED IT WOULD BE?

AND MORE!

÷SIGH÷ AFTER EVERYTHING, YOU'D THINK THEY WOULD ALL LEARN SOME VALUABLE LESSON ABOUT BEING GOOD TO EACH OTHER. OR SOMETHING.

HEY, WHEN WE CHOOSE TO PROTECT PEOPLE, WE CAN'T BE DISAPPOINTED WHEN WE CAN'T CHANGE THEM TOO.

THAT'S UP TO THEM, NOT US.

The End.

IDENTITY

If you are familiar with MARVEL'S VOICES books, each individual anthology is unique not just because of the incredible writers and artists (and the stories they tell), but also the additional spotlights, essays, and interviews in the books that celebrate BIPOC perspectives, stories, and the characters we love.

For MARVEL'S VOICES: IDENTITY #1, the team decided to create a space for each of the writers, artists and members of the Marvel staff to contribute a little extra. We asked each of them, "What does identity mean to you?" Here are their answers.

GENE LUEN YANG, writer

I have a friend named Marsha Qualey who is the author of young adult books. She says that at the heart of every young adult novel is an equation:

Belonging + Power = Identity

Where do I belong? What is my power? These questions plagued me when I was a young Asian American. Super hero comics did help me find answers, but the stories they told often missed the particulars of my life.

That's why I'm so thankful to be part of this anthology. These stories give distinctively Asian American answers to those questions. They give the answers that I was so desperate for when I was a kid.

MARCUS TO, artist

For me, identity is a journey. I've spent a lot of my life trying to figure out just who I am, and it seems to change every so often. The combination of where I grew up, my cultural heritage from my ethnicity, as well as my country of birth. To my love of sports and comics and the search for what all of that means to me. But at the end of the day, I guess all of that is what makes me, me.

CHRISTINA STRAIN, writer/colorist

For me, identity means understanding where we come from and how that helped shape who we are. Be it your family, heritage, or culture—all of these things have a hand in informing who you are as a person. And for those of us who feel like outsiders, having a better understanding of those foundations helps us better understand ourselves in a way that makes us feel less alone. Because it helps us understand we're part of a bigger whole.

JASON LOO, artist

As a Jubilee fan from the '90s X-Men cartoon, it was refreshing to see an Asian character on one of the most popular Marvel teams who wasn't a martial arts expert. Though I wished we got to see her roots shine through a little more. Like Jubilee, I also grew up with Asian immigrant parents. So when I was drawing her story, I could totally relate to her relationship with her mom and dad, and her mixed feelings on food from her culture as a kid. I'm so thrilled we got to tell her true origin story!

BRIAN REBER, colorist

I used to really struggle with my identity growing up. I come from a mixed family where my father is American and my mother is Vietnamese. I grew up with very few other Asians in my community. Outside of my family I had to look to comics, TV, and movies to discover more things about my heritage. I feel representation plays a big role in helping people learn more about what makes up their own identities. I hope that I'm able to provide that for readers, fans, and other creators through my actions and my work.

SABIR PIRZADA, writer

For me, identity is the perpetual reconciliation of how I see myself with how I'm perceived by others. It's the ownership I attempt to have when I describe myself as "American," "Pakistani," "Muslim" or any other descriptor when I know those words mean vastly different things to other people. Identity is the most challenging concept to confine into words, and perhaps the most important.

MASHAL AHMED, artist

I feel like identity is a result of a process of self-actualization. Because when it comes to discovering my identity, the world tunes out for me. It is a process that has led to the discovery of pursuits that are authentic to me such as enjoyment in creating art and the pursuit of understanding self and world through philosophy. Through philosophy, I have also discovered a self-authentic Islamic tradition. All of these things sit right with me, and so I feel that identifying with something lies solely in how it sits with a person at a fundamental

level, rather than in how others value it.

ALYSSA WONG, writer

You are what you eat, and when it comes to family and heritage, I immediately think about food. What do you eat? How do you eat it? With whom do you eat it?

When I was a kid, my mom often made Filipino food. My favorite dish was fish sinigang, because it was one of her favorite dishes. It was something she grew up eating, and something she loved enough to pass down to me. When I met her family in Manila, we bonded over food and coming together for big meals. It didn't matter that we were an ocean apart. Eating with them felt like coming home.

I write about food a lot! It's deeply ingrained in the way I understand family, community, and communication. Putting my mom's sinigang in this Wave story is a delicious nod to her—and to everything she's given me. (Thanks, Mom.)

WHILCE PORTACIO, artist

Identity is the whole of what makes up who you are. In my case I grew up here in America, detached from my Filipino roots because society told me I had to assimilate. Turns out I was really good at it. I was incomplete and didn't even know it.

Comic book fans in Manila allowed me to explore my Pinoy roots. There, I discovered that I've always had little feelings, desires, and attractions which I had felt were not quite American, were actually Pinoy.

I was denying parts of myself from myself. I am now in my 26th year of my journey to discover my complete self...and am happy.

JAY DAVID RAMOS, colorist

When I got the assignment to color Wave's story, I was ecstatic! She's a character I can truly identify with – she is a Filipino who speaks Cebuano and lives in a coastal town in the Philippines! Filipinos are all about family – we call anybody "kuya" (brother), "ate" (sister), "tito" (uncle), and "tita" (auntie); even if there is no relation at all! In our story, after a fierce battle, Wave invites Bishop to dinner with her and her grandfather, welcoming him to her family! And that perfectly captures what it means to identify as a Filipino.

JEREMY HOLT, writer

Identity, to me, is a never-ending journey inward. How I present myself to the world is a culmination of experiences and choices that are constantly evolving. Embracing this change gives me the permission to live my life as authentically as possible, based on no one else's rules but my own.

MAURENE GOO, writer

The word identity and labels like "identity politics" are unnecessarily fraught. I've seen comments that Silk is "just another identity-driven comic sure to bore readers," and though Silk is doing just fine, thanks, it's annoying when terms that help us define our experiences get co-opted and denigrated. I think identity is something every single person living in a society can understand; it's how we view and define ourselves. It doesn't have to focus on your race, religion, or sexual orientation, but there's no denying all of that factors into who you are when you live in a world that constantly challenges people with those definitions. I don't shy away from writing about identity in my work—it's an inextricable part of who my characters are.

PEACH MOMOKO, artist

Honestly, I do not know what my identity is in life. But I do know that I love my home country, Japan, and its history and fairy tales. And I would love to keep representing Japan.

RIAN GONZALES, artist

An identity is something that seeps through every little thing you do that no one can ever take away from you! Especially in the digital age when social acceptance is paraded on billboards and commercials, there are times when we trade bits of ourselves to please others. I used to do it—believe me, it wasn't fun! I only felt a sense of fulfillment when I stayed true to myself and my art. By being myself, I was able to attract amazing people (and hey, I even got Marvel to notice my work!).

INHYUK LEE, artist

It is what allows me to exist as myself. It is to make InHyuk Lee exist as InHyuk Lee.

PHILIP TAN, artist

We are all connecting in many different ways, and here, how our hearts speaks to each other is through comic books. The never-ending drive to create an insatiable hunger to absorb this special kind of art is what ties us together. For me, identity is

here to tell others what beautiful experiences and stories they have yet to see, and at the same time that we all connect with the same intense emotions that colors our worlds.

Identity is what makes us different and alike at the same time. That we are unique individuals and also human beings that laugh, cry, and love the same way.

ASHLEY CHOY,
Merchandising & Promotions Production Designer

To me, identity means how I am represented in life and among others. Growing up as an Asian American, I was afraid of being different from the majority of people, but I grew to understand that my identity is what makes me unique. Identity to me is everything that I am as a person, how I perceive myself, and what makes me special as an individual. And that is something that I take pride in.

MARIKA HASHIMOTO,
Associate Editor, Digital Media

In the world of super heroes, having a secret identity could be what protects you. Or, like so many super heroes, it could also eat away at you if you can't strike a balance between where your two (or three or four...) lives intersect. To me, identity is not necessarily something that has to be revealed or performed. Your true self always has those special powers that lie within you—those qualities are only waiting for the right time, space, or opportunity to come out. Once it does, like any good story, it's the moment we've all been waiting for.

HARRY GO, Director, Creative & Content, Digital Media

As an immigrant with Chinese, Japanese and Filipino heritage, learning how to embrace my identity at an early age was a necessity. I flew on a one-way ticket to New Jersey at the age of eight with one suitcase, a head full of information about the X-Men and a love for super hero comics. I remember going to my first day of school, a kid from another place, and finding myself in a lively conversation about Wolverine vs. Cyclops. That was an important lesson early on. That who I was, was more than what I looked like or where I came from. My identity was partly that, yes, but it's also what's in my head and what's in my heart. As long as I'm able to show people what's on the inside along with what's on the outside, somehow it will always work.

CHRISTINE DINH, Editor, Marvel.com

For my entire life, I knew myself to be Vietnamese American, but I only identified as American. From a young age, I knew I didn't want to be othered. Identity is how we relate ourselves to the world; if we're unable to see ourselves reflected back, it's painful to not feel important enough to be represented. Accepting others begins with accepting yourself. I've come to embrace my full identity; we all deserve to be seen. But it's no longer enough to just be seen; it's time we now see each other.

TIM CHENG, Executive Director, Communications

As a second-generation Asian American, I learned over time to embrace both sides of my identity to create something special. For me, that growth was deeply impacted by seeing myself in stories—both through authentic representation and the universal values we live by. My parents and older brother were the first to shape my identity by telling me their stories and embodying them by example, and in a way, seeing these stories and heroes on the page or screen is no different. And that's what identity means to me: it's telling a living story, which Marvel does in spades.

DARREN SHAN, Editor

Identity is a tough one for me. Am I Asian enough? Am I American enough? It's something that I struggled with as a kid, a teenager and an adult. I used to deny my heritage growing up. Who wants to stand out when you could fit in? But as I get older, I realize: identity is ever-evolving. You're never going to be just one thing your whole life. And at the end of the day, only you should decide who you're going to be, not anyone else.

We'd like to thank all of the creators and staff who took the time to respond. Our identities are not just something personal and particular, but are ever-evolving parts of who we are and our journey. Identities bring us together, set us apart, and make us stronger. From cultural origins and geographic regions to our families and the food we love, identity is not just who we are, but the stories we know and love.

ANGÉLIQUE ROCHÉ
Consulting Editor

NEXT

A huge thanks to all our talented creators for their contribution to this special! And a special thanks to you, the reader, for your support in checking us out! Be sure to look out for more MARVEL'S VOICES content this fall--in comics and podcasts!

And continue to follow the adventures of Marvel's AAPI heroes in these great titles:

SHANG-CHI #4

S.W.O.R.D. #8

RUNAWAYS #38
On sale now!

HELLIONS #14
On sale now!

STAR WARS: DOCTOR APHRA #13

SILK #5
On sale now!

EXCALIBUR #23

MS. MARVEL: BEYOND THE LIMIT #1

NEXT

This issue is now just the latest in a far-reaching lineup of books designed to uplift marginalized voices and celebrate the diversity of Marvel Comics' characters: creators, and staff. Your support means the world to us. Don't be afraid to write in to **mheroes@marvel.com** to tell us what you think.

If you want us to continue, keep putting MARVEL'S VOICES on your pull list! There's tons more content coming your way, including:

COME JOIN THE FESTIVITIES AS MARVEL CELEBRATES THE MIGHTY LATIN-X HEROES AND CREATORS FROM ALL CORNERS OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE!

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